

Gov. Ricketts Showcases Improved ACCESSNebraska Performance

October 29, 2015

Operational changes have resulted in better performance for the system's customers

LINCOLN – Today, Governor Pete Ricketts and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) showcased the improved performance of ACCESSNebraska. These improvements follow the appointment of a new leadership team to lead DHHS and a commitment by the Governor's Office to move the public benefits system forward after hearing about the challenges it faced from Nebraskans across the state.

"One of our state's most important duties is to help our most vulnerable citizens," said Governor Ricketts. "Because of this, finding ways to make government customer friendly is one of the key focuses of my administration. Reforming ACCESSNebraska is a step in the right direction for Nebraskans who depend on the services that the system provides."

"ACCESSNebraska's operations have begun to demonstrate improved results and move beyond the challenges it has faced in the past," said the Governor's COO Felix Davidson. "We will continue to work together to improve the performance of ACCESSNebraska to deliver better results for Nebraskans. This is just the beginning, and we are committed to a culture of process improvement, accountability, transparency, and most importantly better results."

In 2008, the State of Nebraska created the ACCESSNebraska system to change its strategy for the administration of economic assistance and Medicaid programs. The implementation of the new strategy and changes to the program's design fell short of expectations, including the level of service provided to its clients.

Earlier this year, Governor Ricketts appointed Felix Davidson as his Chief Operations Officer and tasked him with working with DHHS to help improve the performance of ACCESSNebraska. In April, the Governor's Office announced that DHHS would begin to publish simple monthly performance metrics for ACCESSNebraska to allow Nebraskans to track the system's performance. Those initial metrics are now showing meaningful improvements in key areas related to federal timeliness, accuracy standards, and internal benchmarks.

New metrics showcased today demonstrate that wait times for ACCESSNebraska call centers processing SNAP applications have fallen from a two-year high of 23 minutes and 51 seconds in August 2014 to a low of 4 minutes and 42 seconds in September 2015 (see the attached chart). DHHS has set a goal to maintain a call wait time of under 5 minutes moving forward, and the agency anticipates that call wait times will continue to decline. A full set of performance metrics for ACCESSNebraska can be found at www.accessnebraska.ne.gov.

Reforms that have led to improvement in the performance metrics include:

- Changes to process flows in ACCESSNebraska mail and document imaging centers that have resulted in reducing the cycle time to process and image documents from days to hours.
- Implementation of daily team huddles to improve communication, better coordinate activities, make adjustments to workforce allocations, and conduct rapid problem-solving.

- Reduction in after-call work has reduced the time it takes to wrap up a call by six minutes which has freed up call center staff time and led to increased capacity with existing staffing levels.

Here is a sample of the positive reviews ACCESSNebraska is receiving from its customers:

- The Tiangwa family applied for SNAP benefits in the past couple months, and they were approved and processed the following day. “This is really important for me and my family,” said Ms. Tiangwa. “I’m so thankful and grateful for the help.”
- A customer from Beatrice called ACCESSNebraska’s service “100% and A+. My phone call was answered in less than a minute. That’s good service! Worker was very helpful.”
- A DHHS partner that helps clients apply for services thanked the Scottsbluff ACCESSNebraska team for handling her cases efficiently and accurately and added that the team has made a “vast difference for her and her clients.”

“Our team is proud of the improvements at ACCESSNebraska and their ability to better serve deserving Nebraskans,” said Children and Family Services Division Director Doug Weinberg. “While we know that we have a lot of work ahead to sustain this improved performance, I am confident we will be successful through the commitment and capability of the entire DHHS team and our partnership with the Governor’s Office.”

